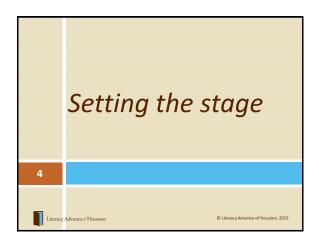
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LITERACY ADVANCE OF HOUSTON	
LITERACY ADVANCE OF HOUSTON	
CLEAR & TO THE POINT:	
THE IMPORTANCE OF USING PLAIN LANGUAGE	-
Literacy Advance ≠ Houston	
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Literacy Advance of Houston	
Exercise y ridvance of riodston	
Mission	
Mission:	
Transforming lives and communities	
through the doorway of literacy.	
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There's plain language, and then there's plainer language...



## Today's session: What is plain language? What is it not? Why is plain language important? How can we incorporate plain language into our activities?

## What is plain language? What is it not? 8



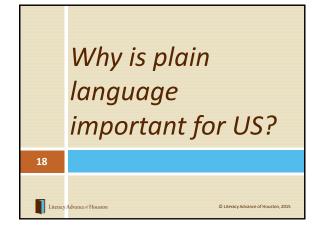
### Plain language IS: **Grammatically correct** language that includes complete sentence structure and accurate word usage. Literacy Advance of Houston Plain language IS: Clear writing and speaking that tells the reader exactly what they need to know, without unnecessary words or confusing expressions. Literacy Advance of Houston Plain language is NOT: - Unprofessional writing or speaking. - A method of "dumbing down" or "talking down" to the reader or listener. Literacy Advance of Houston

### Plain language is NOT: A one-size-fits-all formula in which there is only ONE right way to say things! Literacy Advance of Houston Speaking and writing plainly is an intentional approach that we adopt in order to help those around us. Literacy Advance of Houston Why is plain language important? 15

# Communicating clearly is its own reward!

You may not know when someone is struggling to understand.

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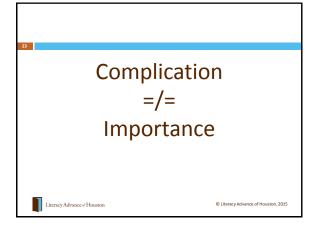




How can we incorporate plain language into our activities?

21

### AIMS & AUDIENCE Literacy Advance of Houston, 2015



Get rid of verbal "fluff"
Avoid idioms

# Pay attention to: - Word choices - Verb forms - Structure & layout - Visuals

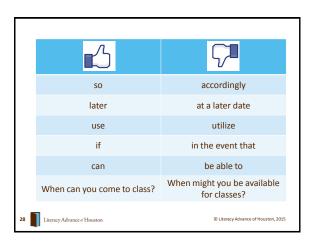
The Ten Commandments
of Plain Language

### **WORD CHOICES:**

1. Use common, everyday words.
When technical terms are
necessary, make sure they are
defined. Avoid acronyms.
Repeat in different words.

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### **WORD CHOICES:**

2. Use "we", "you", and other personal pronouns.Try to avoid the third person.

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### **WORD CHOICES:** 3. Use positive, rather than negative, words and try to avoid exceptions. Please come to class every Failure to attend class on a week. If you miss too many regular basis could result in sessions we will take you out the termination of your of the class. enrolment. If you are over 18 years of age, All persons except those under 18 years of age should... you should... \*NOTE: The negative can be appropriate if you're cautioning the reader, as in: "Don't bring children to class." 32 Literacy Advance of Houston **WORD CHOICES:** 4. Avoid idioms and other words or phrases that could be confusing to a non-native English speaker. Pay attention to numbers. Literacy Advance of Houston



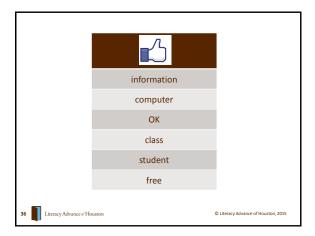
### **WORD CHOICES:**

5. Remember that "shorter" often equals "better" – but not always!

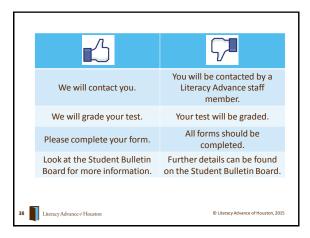
Try to choose words that have the most universal recognition.

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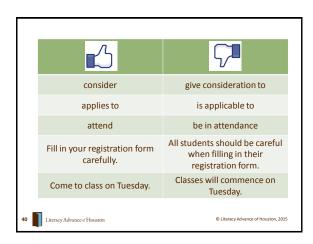


# VERB FORMS: 6. Use the active voice, and avoid the passive voice wherever possible. \*\*District Control of Houston\*\* \*\*O Literacy Advance of Houston\*\*, 2015\*\*



### 7. Use action verbs. Action verbs are short and direct. Talk directly to your readers — use imperatives when appropriate.

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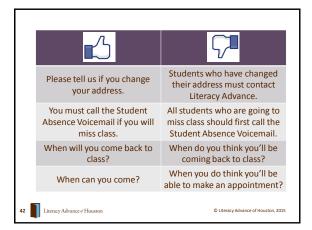
### **VERB FORMS:**

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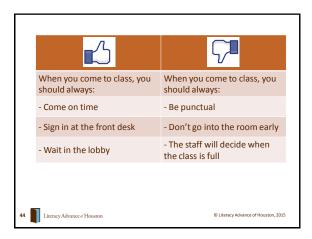
8. Use the simple present tense. Avoid complicated verb forms when you can. Avoid the "-ing" form wherever possible.



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### 9. Use logical layout, including parallel construction and easy-to-read design features such as bullets and tables.



### 10. Use plain fonts, avoiding distortions such as ALL-CAPS, *italics* and <u>underlining</u>. Pay attention to white space and line breaks. Develop consistent use of visuals and other helpful images.





